

# **EXHIBIT 2**

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN  
SOUTHERN DIVISION**

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	)	
In Re: AUTOMOTIVE PARTS	)	12-md-02311
ANTITRUST LITIGATION	)	Honorable Marianne O. Battani
	)	
In re: All Auto Parts Cases	)	2:12-cv-02311-MOB-MKM
	)	
THIS RELATES TO:	)	
	)	
ALL AUTO PARTS CASES	)	
	)	
	)	
	)	
	)	

**DEFENDANTS’ OPPOSITION TO CERTAIN SERVING PARTIES’  
MOTION TO COMPEL DISCOVERY FROM  
NON-PARTY ORIGINAL EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURERS**

**STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE PRESENTED**

1. Whether this Court should compel certain original equipment manufacturers (the “SSEs”) to produce documents regarding confidential settlement negotiations between the SSEs and Defendants that are protected by the settlement privilege recognized in *Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. v. Chiles Power Supply, Inc.*, 332 F.3d 976 (6th Cir. 2003).

**Answer: No**

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**STATEMENT OF CONTROLLING OR MOST APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES**

*Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. v. Chiles Power Supply, Inc.*, 332 F.3d 976 (6th Cir. 2003)

*Allen Cnty. v. Reilly Indus.*, 197 F.R.D. 352, 354 (N.D. Ohio 2000)

*Snap-On Business Solutions, Inc. v. Hyundai Motor Am.*, No. 5:07-CV-1961, 2011 WL 6957594 (N.D. Ohio Feb. 3, 2011)

*BioLumix Inc. v. Centrus Int’l Inc.*, No. 08-11418, 2013 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 162002 (E.D. Mich. Nov. 14, 2013)

## INTRODUCTION

Plaintiffs seek to compel certain original equipment manufacturers (the “SSEs”)<sup>1</sup> to produce documents regarding confidential communications that the SSEs and Defendants may have had to try to settle any claims the SSEs may have relating to the conduct at issue in this MDL proceeding. (Mot. 11-15.)<sup>2</sup> This Court should deny Plaintiffs’ motion because it seeks documents that the Sixth Circuit has held are privileged.

In *Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. v. Chiles Power Supply, Inc.*, 332 F.3d 976 (6th Cir. 2003), the Sixth Circuit established a privilege that protects “all communications made in furtherance of settlement” regardless of whether the communications are “informal[]” or “done under the auspices of the court.” *Id.* at 980, 983. The Court held that strong public policy favors the privilege because settlement negotiations are ineffective unless they are kept confidential. Additionally, the Court concluded that communications made during settlement negotiations are categorically unreliable and thus have little probative value in subsequent litigation.

Documents concerning settlement communications between Defendants and the SSEs lie at the heart of this privilege. Nevertheless, Plaintiffs argue that the documents are not privileged because the SSEs had not sued Defendants at the time of the alleged communications, the SSEs have not shown that the communications are unreliable, and the public interest supports disregarding the privilege here. (Mot. 14-15.) These arguments are meritless. *Goodyear’s* settlement privilege applies to documents concerning “*all* communications made in furtherance of settlement,” regardless of whether they are “informal” pre-suit settlement discussions or

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<sup>1</sup> “SSEs” stands for “Specified Subpoena Entities” and refers to the particular OEMs that have jointly negotiated with the parties that served the subpoena over its scope and who are subject to Plaintiffs’ motion to compel.

<sup>2</sup> Citations to “Mot.” are to Plaintiffs’ brief in support of their motion to compel (Dkt. No. 1188) which is the subject of this Opposition. “Plaintiffs” refers only to those plaintiffs that filed the motion to compel (Automobile Dealer Plaintiffs, End-Payor Plaintiffs, Truck and Equipment Dealer Plaintiffs, the State of Florida, and the State of Indiana).

between parties in active litigation; there is no requirement that the party invoking the privilege show that each individual communication is unreliable; and *Goodyear* makes clear that the public interest requires applying the privilege to all settlement communications across-the-board. *Goodyear*, 332 F.3d at 980-83 (emphasis added).

### **BACKGROUND**

In July and August 2015, the plaintiffs and defendants in the MDL jointly issued subpoenas to the SSEs (and other OEMs), primarily seeking sales and cost information from each of them relating to their acquisition of the parts at issue in this MDL. (*See generally* Ex. 1.) Each of those subpoenas included Request 31, which seeks from the SSEs “[a]ll Documents relating to Your or other OEMs’ negotiations or Communications with any of the Defendants or other Components or Assemblies suppliers in connection with Defendants’ and other Components or Assemblies suppliers’ conduct at issue in MDL No. 2311 and Documents Defendants or other Components or Assemblies suppliers provided to You or other OEMs, in connection with the facts described in any Plaintiffs’ Complaints.” (Ex. 1 at 34.)

Although the parties jointly issued the subpoenas, Defendants did “not join in Request No. 31.” (*See* Ex. 2, 7/16/15 Subpoena Cover Letter to SSEs.) Both the SSEs and Defendants subsequently objected to that request on settlement privilege grounds. (*See* Ex. 3, 12/18/15 Letter from C. Kass to S. Klein, at 13; Ex. 4, 10/14/15 Letter from R. Spiegel to C. Kass, at 1 (“[d]efendants specifically object to the production of any documents in response to Request No. 31, as it seeks documents that would violate the settlement-communications privilege recognized in *Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. v. Chiles Power Supply, Inc.*, 332 F.3d 976 (6th Cir. 2003) and *Allen Cnty. v. Reilly Indus.*, 197 F.R.D. 352, 354 (N.D. Ohio 2000)”); Ex. 5, 11/24/15 Letter from S. Klein to C. Kass, at 5 n.8 (“Defendants object to Request 31 on the ground that it seeks



documents which Defendants believe are protected by the settlement-communications privilege.”.)

### **ARGUMENT**

#### **I. The Settlement Privilege Protects Documents Concerning Settlement Communications Between Defendants And The SSEs.**

##### **A. The Documents Plaintiffs Seek Are Covered By The Settlement Privilege.**

In *Goodyear*, the Sixth Circuit established a settlement privilege, recognizing that there is a “strong public interest” in settling disputes and “in order for settlement talks to be effective, parties must feel uninhibited in their communications.” *Goodyear*, 332 F.3d at 980. The Court also reasoned that settlement communications have little probative value given the “inherent questionability of the truthfulness of any statements made therein” because those statements “may be motivated by a desire for peace rather than from any concession of weakness of position.” *Id.* at 981, 983 (quoting, among others, *United States v. Contra Costa Cty. Water Dist.*, 678 F.2d 90, 92 (9th Cir. 1982)). Accordingly, the Court held that “any communication made in furtherance of settlement” are privileged, regardless of whether the communication was “informal[]” or “done under the auspices of the court.” *Id.* at 980, 983.<sup>3</sup>

Here, *Goodyear* controls and mandates that “any communications” between the SSEs and Defendants “made in furtherance of settlement” not be produced. *Id.* at 983. Therefore, to the extent Request 31 seeks documents reflecting settlement communications, Plaintiffs’ motion to compel should be denied. *See id.*

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<sup>3</sup> Because the privilege belongs to both parties in the settlement negotiations, either party may unilaterally invoke the privilege to prevent disclosure of privileged information. *See, e.g., Anderson v. Clarksville Montgomery Cty. Sch. Bd. & Sch. Dist.*, 229 F.R.D. 546, 547 (M.D. Tenn. 2005) (“when parties jointly are holders of the same privilege, neither of them may unilaterally waive the privilege for the other with respect to third parties over the others’ objection.”). Defendants therefore have the right to object to Request No. 31, even though it is only directed at the SSEs.

Plaintiffs are incorrect in arguing that Defendants, in response to Plaintiffs' document requests, "have agreed" to produce settlement communications between Defendants and OEMs. (Mot. 12.) At all times, Defendants have refused to produce privileged settlement communications, and in the very email Plaintiffs attach to their motion, the relevant Defendants made clear that they would only produce *non-privileged* communications, if they existed. (Ex. 6, 7/2/14 Letter from A. Maltas to V. Romanenko, at 1; Ex. 7, 7/14/14 Email from D. Donovan to V. Romanenko; *see* Mot. 12.)

Plaintiffs' claim that they need to seek these materials from the SSEs is irrelevant and unsupported. (*See* Mot. 12-13.) Plaintiffs' supposed need is irrelevant because "the very nature of a privilege is that it prevents disclosure of information that may be relevant in the case, in order to serve interests that are of over-arching importance." *Hucko v. City of Oak Forest*, 185 F.R.D. 526, 530 (N.D. Ill. 1999). Further, Plaintiffs have already sought these same documents by propounding a document request relating to "negotiations and communications" with OEMs: "All Documents related to your or other Defendants' negotiations or communications with any OEMs in connection with the facts described in Dealership Plaintiffs' Complaint and Documents you or any other Defendant provided to OEMs or other customers, in connection with the facts described in Dealership Plaintiffs' Complaint." (Ex. 8, Dealership Plaintiffs' First Request for Production of Documents Directed to All Defendants, at 3 (Request No. 11).) Because the privilege covers only documents *created in furtherance of* settlement, and *not* documents merely exchanged during settlement communications, it does not protect certain other documents (*i.e.*, pre-existing business documents) that are responsive to Plaintiffs' other non-objectionable discovery requests issued to certain Defendants. *See Grupo Condumex, S.A. de C.V. v. SPX*

*Corp.*, 331 F. Supp. 2d 623, 629 (N.D. Ohio 2004).<sup>4</sup> The only reason for Plaintiffs to seek documents from the SSEs pursuant to Request 31 is to attempt to interject themselves into past, ongoing, and future settlement discussions, by obtaining *other kinds* of documents about the conduct at issue that Defendants properly have refused to produce on privilege grounds. Plaintiffs’ motion thus strikes at the heart of the privilege.

## **B. Plaintiffs’ Attempts To Circumvent The Privilege Fail.**

Plaintiffs offer three arguments that the documents regarding settlement communications that they seek are not covered by the privilege recognized in *Goodyear*. Each fails.

### **i. *Goodyear* Holds That The Public Interest Favors The Confidentiality Of All Settlement Communications.**

Plaintiffs misconstrue *Goodyear* and argue that the application of a settlement privilege must be “weighed against the public interest” on a “case-by-case basis” for each settlement communication. (Mot. 13.) That is not so. In *Goodyear*, the Court of Appeals used the phrase “case-by-case basis” when *it* (the Court of Appeals) was determining whether it should create a *categorical* settlement privilege. *Goodyear*, 332 F.3d at 980. The Court did not impose on district courts the impossible task of examining the public interest on a document-by-document basis. *Id.* The only relevant question is whether a document reflects communications made for the purpose of furthering settlement discussions. If so, the document is privileged.

But even if district courts were supposed to evaluate individual settlement communications on a case-by-case basis—which they are not—the public interest here still favors non-disclosure. Any settlements that Defendants or other suppliers have reached with the

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<sup>4</sup> To the extent any of these documents relate to products not at issue in the MDL or relate to products subject to a current case but as to which DOJ has a continued objection to discovery moving forward (automobile hoses, brake hoses, and shock absorbers), those documents would be among the materials DOJ has continued to object to any entity, including the SSEs, producing.

SSEs have conserved judicial resources. *See id.* (there is a “strong public interest” in settling disputes). Some Defendants may have already settled confidentially with some SSEs, but many certainly have not. If this Court were to allow discovery of settlement communications, those Defendants would be discouraged from settling with any other OEMs, burdening the courts with further litigation. And the deleterious effect on settlement would not be limited to this MDL: allowing courts to essentially revoke the settlement privilege after-the-fact would dissuade all parties in this Circuit from engaging in the kind of frank discussions necessary to settle cases. Indeed, Plaintiffs themselves have recognized the importance of confidentiality of settlements by including confidentiality provisions in their settlement agreements with Defendants to date. (*See, e.g.,* Ex. 9, Hitachi Automotive Systems, Ltd. Automobile Dealership Settlement Agreement, ¶ 45 (“[Hitachi] and Automobile Dealership Plaintiffs agreement not to disclose publicly or to any other person, except for Releasees where necessary, the terms of this Agreement until this Agreement is submitted to the Court for Preliminary Approval.”).)

**ii. There Is No “Pending Case” Requirement.**

Plaintiffs argue that the SSEs and Defendants cannot assert a settlement privilege over the communications because the OEMs “never even filed a case.” (Mot. 14.) There is no requirement that a case be pending for the privilege to apply. As the Northern District of Ohio concluded in rejecting the argument that a pending case is necessary, such a requirement conflicts “with explicit language in *Goodyear*” stating that the settlement privilege applies “‘whether settlement negotiations are done under the auspices of the court or informally between the parties.’” *Snap-On Business Solutions, Inc. v. Hyundai Motor Am.*, No. 5:07-CV-1961, 2011 WL 6957594, at \*1 n. 2 (N.D. Ohio Feb. 3, 2011) (quoting *Goodyear*, 332 F.3d at 980). At least two other courts in the Sixth Circuit have similarly suggested that there is no need for an existing case for the privilege to apply to documents reflecting settlement communications. *See Konyn v.*

*Lake Superior & Ishpeming R.R. Co.*, No. 2:11-cv-51, 2015 WL 10276153, at \*1 (W.D. Mich. Feb. 3, 2012) (citing *Goodyear* to hold that “[c]onversations between plaintiff or plaintiff’s counsel and [a non-party] regarding negotiation of a settlement of claims plaintiff *may have* against [the non-party] are protected from disclosure”); *BioLumix Inc. v. Centrus Int’l Inc.*, No. 08-11418, 2013 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 162002 (E.D. Mich. Nov. 14, 2013) (“Communications made in furtherance of settlement are privileged....*There is no requirement that the privileged communication be between adverse parties.*”) (emphases added). Requiring a pre-existing case would defeat *Goodyear*’s goal of avoiding disputes in the first place, since parties could not engage in confidential settlement discussions until after litigation had *already* commenced. *See Goodyear*, 332 F.3d at 980-81.

Plaintiffs cite a single district court case in support of their argument, but it does not support a “pending case” requirement. (Mot. 14 (citing *State v. Little River Band of Ottawa Indians*, No. 5:05-cv-95, 2007 WL 851282, at \*2 (W.D. Mich. March 16, 2007).) The letter at issue in that case was not privileged because it was not kept confidential, it notified the recipient of an action already taken, and it represented an outright refusal to act that bore no indicia that it was part of settlement negotiations. *Id.* at \*2-\*3. To the extent *Little River Band* required an existing case, it is inconsistent with *Goodyear* and the majority of district courts that have addressed this issue.

**iii. There Is No Requirement That Courts Must Assess The Reliability Of Individual Settlement Communications.**

Plaintiffs also argue that settlement communications between the OEMs and Defendants should not be privileged because there has been no showing that they are “inherently unreliable.” (Mot. 15 (citing *Grupo Condumex*, 331 F. Supp. 2d at 629.)) But *Goodyear* does not require the parties to show that each individual communication is unreliable to invoke the privilege (an

impossible task without revealing the substance of the communication, anyway). The Court of Appeals merely cited the inherent unreliability of settlement communications *as a class* as one of the reasons, in addition to the policy favoring confidential negotiations, for the creation of a settlement privilege. *Goodyear*, 332 F.3d at 981 (“The public policy favoring secret negotiations, combined with the *inherent* questionability of the truthfulness of any statements made therein, leads us to conclude that a settlement privilege should exist....”) (emphasis added).

### **CONCLUSION**

As set forth above, Plaintiffs’ motion to compel discovery from the SSEs should be denied to the extent it seeks documents relating to communications between the SSEs and Defendants to further their settlement discussions, which are protected by the settlement privilege.

Dated: February 17, 2016

**JENNER & BLOCK LLP**

/s/ Terrence J. Truax

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Terrence J. Truax  
Charles B. Sklarsky  
Michael T. Brody  
Gabriel A. Fuentes  
Daniel T. Fenske  
**JENNER & BLOCK LLP**  
353 N. Clark Street  
Chicago, IL 60654-3456  
ttruax@jenner.com  
csklarsky@jenner.com  
mbrody@jenner.com  
gfuentes@jenner.com  
dfenske@jenner.com

Gary K. August  
Jamie J. Janisch  
**ZAUSMER, AUGUST & CALDWELL, P.C.**  
31700 Middlebelt Road, Suite 150  
Farmington Hills, MI 48334-2374  
gaugust@zacfirm.com  
jjanisch@zacfirm.com

*Counsel for Defendants Mitsubishi Electric  
Corporation, Mitsubishi Electric US Holdings, Inc.,  
and Mitsubishi Electric Automotive America, Inc.*

**CLEARY GOTTlieb STEEN & HAMILTON  
LLP**

/s/ Brian Byrne (w/consent)

Brian Byrne

Ryan M. Davis

**CLEARY GOTTlieb STEEN & HAMILTON  
LLP**

2000 Pennsylvania Avenue NW

Washington, DC 20006

Tel: (202) 974-1850

Fax: (202) 974-1999

bbyrne@cgsh.com

rmdavis@cgsh.com

Howard B. Iwrey (P39635)

Brian M. Moore (P58584)

**DYKEMA GOSSETT PLLC**

39577 Woodward Ave., Suite 300

Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304

Tel: (248) 203-0700

Fax: (248) 203-0763

hiwrey@dykema.com

bmoore@dykema.com

*Counsel for Defendants Valeo Japan Co., Ltd.,  
Valeo Inc., Valeo Electrical Systems, Inc., and  
Valeo Climate Control Corp.*



**PORTER WRIGHT MORRIS & ARTHUR LLP**

/s/ Donald M. Barnes (w/consent)

Donald M. Barnes

Molly S. Crabtree

Jay L. Levine

Christopher C. Yook

**PORTER WRIGHT MORRIS & ARTHUR LLP**

1900 K Street, NW, Ste. 1110

Washington, DC 20006

Tel.: (202) 778-3054

Fax: (202) 778-3063

dbarnes@porterwright.com

mcrabtree@porterwright.com

jlevine@porterwright.com

cyook@porterwright.com

*Attorneys for Defendants G.S. Electech, Inc.,*

*G.S.W. Manufacturing, Inc., and G.S. Wiring*

*Systems, Inc.*

**ARNOLD & PORTER LLP**

/s/ Franklin R. Liss (w/consent)

Franklin R. Liss

Barbara H. Wootton

Danielle M. Garten

Matthew Tabas

**ARNOLD & PORTER LLP**

601 Massachusetts Ave., NW

Washington, DC 20001-3743

Tel: (202) 942-5969

Fax: (202) 942-5999

frank.liss@aporter.com

barbara.wootton@aporter.com

danielle.garten@aporter.com

matthew.tabas@aporter.com

/s/ Howard B. Iwrey (w/consent)

Howard B. Iwrey (P39635)

Brian M. Moore (P58584)

**DYKEMA GOSSETT PLLC**

39577 Woodward Ave., Suite 300

Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304

Tel: (248) 203-0700

Fax: (248) 203-0763

hiwrey@dykema.com

bmoore@dykema.com

*Counsel for Defendants Koito Manufacturing Co.,  
Ltd. and North American Lighting, Inc.*

**FARMER BROWNSTEIN JAEGER LLP**

/s/ William S. Farmer (w/consent)

William S. Farmer

David C. Brownstein

**FARMER BROWNSTEIN JAEGER LLP**

235 Montgomery Street, Suite 835

San Francisco, CA 94102

Tel.: (415) 795-2050

Fax: (415) 520-5678

wfarmer@fbj-law.com

dbrownstein@fbj-law.com

*Counsel for Defendants Mitsuba Corporation and  
American Mitsuba Corporation*

**COVINGTON & BURLING LLP**

/s/ Anita F. Stork (w/consent)

Anita F. Stork

Gretchen Hoff Varner

Cortlin H. Lannin

**COVINGTON & BURLING LLP**

One Front Street, 35th Floor

San Francisco, CA 94111

Telephone: (415) 591-6000

Fax: (415) 955-6550

astork@cov.com

ghoffvarner@cov.com

clannin@cov.com

Michael J. Fanelli

Ashley E. Bass

**COVINGTON & BURLING LLP**

One CityCenter

850 Tenth Street, NW

Washington, DC 20001-4956

Telephone: (202) 662-6000

Fax: (202) 662-5383

mfanelli@cov.com

abass@cov.com

*Attorneys for Defendants Alps Electric Co., Ltd.;  
Alps Electric (North America), Inc.; and Alps  
Automotive, Inc.*

**BROOKS WILKINS SHARKEY & TURCO  
PLLC**

/s/Maureen T. Taylor (w/consent)

Herbert C. Donovan (P51939)

Maureen T. Taylor (P63547)

**BROOKS WILKINS SHARKEY & TURCO  
PLLC**

401 Old South Woodward, Suite 400

Birmingham, MI 48009

Telephone: (248) 971-1721

Fax: (248) 971-1801

taylor@bwst-law.com

donovan@bwst-law.com

*Attorneys for Defendants Alps Electric Co., Ltd.;  
Alps Electric (North America), Inc.; and Alps  
Automotive, Inc.*

**SQUIRE PATTON BOGGS (US) LLP**

/s/ Barry A. Pupkin (w/consent)

Barry A. Pupkin

Iain R. McPhie

Jeremy W. Dutra

**SQUIRE PATTON BOGGS (US) LLP**

2550 M Street, NW

Washington, DC 20037

Tel: (202) 457-6000

Fax: (202) 457-6315

Barry.Pupkin@squirepb.com

Iain.McPhie@squirepb.com

Jeremy.Dutra@squirepb.com

*Counsel for Aisan Industry Co., Ltd.,  
Aisan Corporation of America  
Franklin Precision Industry, Inc.,  
and Hyundam Industrial Co., Ltd.*

**WILMERHALE LLP**

/s/ Steven F. Cherry (w/consent)

Steven F. Cherry

David P. Donovan

Brian C. Smith

**WILMERHALE LLP**

1875 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20006

Telephone: (202) 663-6000

Facsimile: (202) 663-6363

steven.cherry@wilmerhale.com

david.donovan@wilmerhale.com

brian.smith@wilmerhale.com

*Counsel for Defendants DENSO Corporation, DENSO International America, Inc., DENSO International Korea Corporation, DENSO Korea Automotive Corporation, DENSO Products & Services Americas, ASMO Co., Ltd., ASMO North America, LLC, ASMO Greenville of North Carolina, Inc., ASMO Manufacturing, Inc., and ASMO North Carolina Inc.*

Steven M. Zarowny

General Counsel

DENSO International America, Inc.

24777 Denso Drive

Southfield, MI 48033

Telephone: (248) 372-8252

Fax: (248) 213-2551

steve\_zarowny@denso-diam.com

*Counsel for Defendant DENSO International America, Inc.*

**ARNOLD & PORTER LLP**

/s/ James L. Cooper (w/consent)

James L. Cooper

Danielle M. Garten

Adam M. Pergament

**ARNOLD & PORTER LLP**

601 Massachusetts Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20001

(202) 942-5000

(202) 942-5999 (facsimile)

james.cooper@aporter.com

danielle.garten@aporter.com

adam.pergament@aporter.com

Joanne Geha Swanson (P33594)

Fred K. Herrmann (P49519)

Matthew L. Powell (P69186)

**KERR, RUSSELL AND WEBER, PLC**

500 Woodward Avenue, Suite 2500

Detroit, MI 48226

(313) 961-0200

(313) 961-0388 (facsimile)

jswanson@kerr-russell.com

fherrmann@kerr-russell.com

mpowell@kerr-russell.com

*Counsel for Defendants Yamashita Rubber Co., Ltd.  
and YUSA Corporation*

**ARNOLD & PORTER LLP**

/s/ James L. Cooper (w/consent)

James L. Cooper

Michael A. Rubin

Katherine Clemons

Stephanie I. Fine

**ARNOLD & PORTER LLP**

601 Massachusetts Avenue NW

Washington, DC 20001

Telephone: (202) 942-5000

Fax: (202) 942-5999

james.cooper@aporter.com

michael.rubin@aporter.com

katherine.clemons@aporter.com

stephanie.fine@aporter.com

Joanne Geha Swanson (P33594)

Fred Herrmann (P49519)

Matthew L. Powell (P69186)

**KERR, RUSSELL AND WEBER,  
PLC**

500 Woodward Avenue, Suite 2500

Detroit, MI 48226

Telephone: (313) 961-0200

Fax: (313) 961-0388

jswanson@kerr-russell.com

fherrmann@kerr-russell.com

mpowell@kerr-russell.com

*Attorneys for Defendants Fujikura Ltd. and  
Fujikura Automotive America LLC*

**BAKER BOTTS L.L.P.**

/s/ Randall J. Turk (w/consent)

Randall J. Turk

John Taladay

Mark Miller

Heather Souder Choi

Sterling A. Marchand

**BAKER BOTTS L.L.P.**

1299 Pennsylvania Avenue., NW

Washington, D.C. 20004-2400

Phone: 202.639.7700

Fax: 202.639.7890

*Counsel for Defendants Toyoda Gosei Co., Ltd.,  
Toyoda Gosei North America Corp., and TG  
Missouri Corp.*



**JONES DAY**

/s/ Michael R. Shumaker (w/consent)

Michael R. Shumaker

John M. Majoras

Carmen G. McLean

**JONES DAY**

51 Louisiana Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20001-2113

Telephone: (202) 879-3939

Facsimile: (202) 626-1700

mrshumaker@jonesday.com

jmmajoras@jonesday.com

cgmclean@jonesday.com

Michelle K. Fischer

Stephen J. Squeri

**JONES DAY**

North Point

901 Lakeside Avenue

Cleveland, OH 44114

Telephone: (216) 586-3939

Facsimile: (216) 579-0212

mfischer@jonesday.com

sjsqueri@jonesday.com

Tiffany D. Lipscomb-Jackson

**JONES DAY**

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 165017

Columbus, Ohio 43216-5017

Street Address: 325 John H. McConnell Boulevard

Suite 600

Columbus, Ohio 43215

Telephone: (614) 469-3939

Facsimile: (614) 461-4198

tdlipscombjackson@jonesday.com

*Counsel for Defendants Yazaki Corporation and  
Yazaki North America, Inc.*

**ALLEN & OVERY LLP**

/s/ John Roberti (w/consent)

John Roberti

Matthew R. Boucher

**ALLEN & OVERY LLP**

1101 New York Avenue NW

Washington, D.C. 20005

202-683-3800

john.roberti@allenoverly.com

matthew.boucher@allenoverly.com

Michael S. Feldberg

**ALLEN & OVERY LLP**

1221 Avenue of the Americas

New York, NY 10020

212-610-6360

michael.feldberg@allenoverly.com

William R. Jansen (P36688)

Michael G. Brady (P57331)

**WARNER NORCROSS & JUDD LLP**

2000 Town Center, Suite 2700

Southfield, MI 48075-1318

248-784-5000

wjansen@wnj.com

mbrady@wnj.com

*Counsel for Robert Bosch LLC and Robert Bosch  
GmbH*

**SHEARMAN & STERLING LLP**

/s/ Heather L. Kafele (w/ consent)

Heather L. Kafele

Jon Weingart

**SHEARMAN & STERLING LLP**

401 9th Street, NW

Washington, DC 20004

Phone: (202) 508-8000

Fax: (202) 508-8100

hkafele@shearman.com

jon.weingart@shearman.com

*Counsel for Defendants JTEKT Corporation,  
JTEKT Automotive North America, Inc., and JTEKT  
North America Corporation, formerly d/b/a Koyo  
Corporation of U.S.A.*

**LANE POWELL PC**

/s/ Larry S. Gangnes (w/consent)

Larry S. Gangnes

**LANE POWELL PC**

U.S. Bank Centre

1420 Fifth Ave., Suite 4200

P.O. Box 91302

Seattle, WA 98111-9402

Tel.: (206) 223-7000

Fax: (206) 223-7107

gangnesl@lanepowell.com

Craig D. Bachman

Kenneth R. Davis II

Darin M. Sands

Masayuki Yamaguchi

Peter D. Hawkes

**LANE POWELL PC**

MODA Tower

601 SW Second Ave., Suite 2100

Portland, OR 97204-3158

Tel.: (503) 778-2100

Fax: (503) 778-2200

bachmanc@lanepowell.com

davisk@lanepowell.com

sandsd@lanepowell.com

yamaguchim@lanepowell.com

hawkesp@lanepowell.com

Richard D. Visio (P30246)

Ronald S. Nixon (P57117)

**KEMP KLEIN LAW FIRM**

201 W. Big Beaver, Suite 600

Troy, MI 48084

Tel.: (248) 528-1111

Fax: (248) 528-5129

richard.bisio@kkue.com

ron.nixon@kkue.com

*Attorneys for Defendants Furukawa Electric Co.,  
Ltd. and American Furukawa, Inc.*

**LANE POWELL PC**

/s/ Kenneth R. Davis II (w/consent)

Craig D. Bachman  
Kenneth R. Davis II  
Darin M. Sands  
Masayuki Yamaguchi  
MODA Tower  
601 SW Second Avenue, Suite 2100  
Portland, OR 97204-3158  
Telephone: 503.778.2100  
bachmanc@lanepowell.com  
davisk@lanepowell.com  
sandsd@lanepowell.com  
yamaguchim@lanepowell.com

Larry S. Gangnes  
**LANE POWELL PC**  
U.S. Bank Centre  
1420 Fifth Avenue, Suite 4200  
PO Box 91302  
Seattle, WA 98111-9402  
Telephone: 206.223.7000  
gangnesl@lanepowell.com

Richard D. Bisio (P30246)  
Ronald S. Nixon (P57117)  
**KEMP KLEIN LAW FIRM**  
201 W. Big Beaver, Suite 600  
Troy, MI 48084  
Telephone: 248.528.1111  
richard.bisio@kkue.com  
ron.nixon@kkue.com

*Attorneys for Defendants Nachi-Fujikoshi Corp.  
and Nachi America Inc.*

**HERTZ SCHRAM PC**

/s/ Bradley J. Schram (w/consent)

Bradley J. Schram

MI Bar # P26337

**HERTZ SCHRAM PC**

1760 S. Telegraph Road

Suite 3000

Bloomfield Hills, MI 48302

Tel.: (248) 335-5000

Fax: (248) 335-3346

bschram@hertzschrampc.com

*Counsel for Toyo Tire & Rubber Co., Ltd., Toyo North America Manufacturing Inc., Toyo Tire North America OE Sales LLC, and Toyo Automotive Parts (USA), Inc.*

**BUTZEL LONG**

/s/ Sheldon H. Klein (w/consent)

Sheldon H. Klein (P41062)

David F. DuMouchel (P25658)

**BUTZEL LONG**

150 West Jefferson, Suite 100

Detroit, MI 48226

Tel: (313) 225-7000

Fax: (313) 225-7080

klein@butzel.com

dumouchd@butzel.com

W. Todd Miller

**BAKER & MILLER PLLC**

2401 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Suite 300

Washington, DC 20037

Tel.: (202) 663-7820

Fax: (202) 663-7849

TMiller@bakerandmiller.com

*Attorneys for Defendants TRAM, Inc. and Tokai Rika Co., Ltd.*

**CLEARY GOTTlieb STEEN &  
HAMILTON LLP**

/s/ Steven J. Kaiser (w/consent)

Steven J. Kaiser

Jeremy Calsyn

Teale Toweill

Larry Malm

**CLEARY GOTTlieb STEEN &  
HAMILTON LLP**

2000 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20006

Tel.: (202) 974-1554

Fax: (202) 974-1999

skaiser@cgsh.com

jcalsyn@cgsh.com

ttoweill@cgsh.com

lmalm@cgsh.com

David A. Ettinger (P26537)

**HONIGMAN, MILLER, SCHWARTZ AND  
COHN LLP**

660 Woodward Avenue, Suite 2290

Detroit, MI 48226-3506

Tel.: (313) 465-7368

Fax: (313) 465-7369

dettinger@honigman.com

*Counsel for Defendants NSK Ltd. and NSK  
Americas, Inc.*

**WINSTON & STRAWN LLP**

/s/ Jeffrey J. Amato (w/consent)

A. Paul Victor

Jeffrey L. Kessler

Jeffrey J. Amato

Molly M. Donovan

Elizabeth A. Cate

**WINSTON & STRAWN LLP**

200 Park Avenue

New York, NY 10166-4193

Tel.: (212) 294-6700

Fax: (212) 294-4700

pvector@winston.com

jkessler@winston.com

mmdonovan@winston.com

jamato@winston.com

ecate@winston.com

**KERR, RUSSELL AND WEBER, PLC**

Fred K. Herrmann (P49519)

500 Woodward Avenue, Suite 2500

Detroit, MI 48226

Tel. (313) 961-0200

fherrmann@kerr-russell.com

*Attorneys for Defendants NTN Corporation and  
NTN USA Corporation*



**WINSTON & STRAWN LLP**

/s/ Jeffrey L. Kessler (w/consent)

Jeffrey L. Kessler

A. Paul Victor

Eva W. Cole

Jeffrey J. Amato

**WINSTON & STRAWN LLP**

200 Park Avenue

New York, NY 10166-4193

(212) 294-6700 (t)

(212) 294-4700 (f)

JKessler@winston.com

PVictor@winston.com

EWCole@winston.com

JAmato@winston.com

Brandon Duke

**WINSTON & STRAWN LLP**

1111 Louisiana Street, 25th Floor

Houston, TX 77002

(713) 651-2636 (t)

(713) 651-2700 (f)

BDuke@winston.com

*Counsel for Panasonic Corporation and Panasonic  
Corporation of North America*

**COVINGTON & BURLING LLP**

/s/ Bruce A. Baird (w/ consent)

Bruce A. Baird

Sarah L. Wilson

Michael A. Fanelli

**COVINGTON & BURLING LLP**

One CityCenter

850 Tenth Street NW

Washington, DC 20001

Telephone: (202) 662-6000

Fax: (202) 662-6291

bbaird@cov.com

swilson@cov.com

mfanelli@cov.com

Anita F. Stork

**COVINGTON & BURLING LLP**

One Front Street

35th Floor

San Francisco, CA 94111

Telephone: (415) 591-6000

Fax: (415) 955-6550

astork@cov.com

**BROOKS WILKINS SHARKEY & TURCO  
PLLC**

/s/ Maureen T. Taylor (w/ consent)

Maureen T. Taylor

**BROOKS WILKINS SHARKEY & TURCO  
PLLC**

401 Old South Woodward, Suite 400

Birmingham, MI 48009

Telephone: (248) 971-1721

Fax: (248) 971-1801

taylor@bwst-law.com

*Counsel for Defendants Keihin Corporation and  
Keihin North America, Inc.*

**LATHAM & WATKINS LLP**

/s/ Marguerite M. Sullivan (w/consent)

Marguerite M. Sullivan

Allyson M. Maltas

**LATHAM & WATKINS LLP**

555 Eleventh Street NW, Suite 1000

Washington, DC 20004

Telephone: (202) 637-2200

Fax: (202) 637-2201

Marguerite.Sullivan@lw.com

Allyson.Maltas@lw.com

Daniel M. Wall

**LATHAM & WATKINS LLP**

505 Montgomery Street, Suite 2000

San Francisco, CA 94111

Telephone: (415) 395-0600

Fax: (415) 395-8095

dan.wall@lw.com

William H. Horton (P31567)

**GIARMARCO, MULLINS & HORTON, P.C.**

101 West Big Beaver Road, Tenth Floor

Troy, MI 48084-5280

Telephone: 248-457-7060

bhorton@gmhlaw.com

*Counsel for Defendants Sumitomo Electric  
Industries, Ltd.; Sumitomo Wiring Systems, Ltd.;  
Sumitomo Electric Wiring Systems, Inc.; K&S  
Wiring Systems, Inc.; and Sumitomo Wiring Systems  
(U.S.A.) Inc.*

**LATHAM & WATKINS LLP**

/s/ Marguerite M. Sullivan (w/consent)

Marguerite M. Sullivan

Allyson M. Maltas

Thomas J. Humphrey

**LATHAM & WATKINS LLP**

555 Eleventh Street NW, Suite 1000

Washington, D.C. 20004-1304

Tel.: (202) 637-2200

Fax: (202) 537-2201

marguerite.sullivan@lw.com

allyson.maltas@lw.com

thomas.humphrey@lw.com

Howard B. Iwrey (P39635)

Brian M. Moore (P58584)

**DYKEMA GOSSETT PLLC**

39577 Woodward Ave., Suite 300

Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304

Tel: (248) 203-0700

Fax: (248) 203-0763

hiwrey@dykema.com

bmoore@dykema.com

*Counsel for Weastec, Inc.*

**WILLIAMS & CONNOLLY LLP**

/s/ David M. Zinn (w/consent)

David M. Zinn

John E. Schmidtlein

Samuel Bryant Davidoff

**WILLIAMS & CONNOLLY LLP**

725 Twelfth Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20005

Tel: 202-434-5000

Fax: 202-434-5029

dzinn@wc.com

jschmidtlein@wc.com

sdavidoff@wc.com

*Counsel for Defendants Takata Corporation and TK Holdings, Inc.*

**MORGAN, LEWIS & BOCKIUS LLP**

/s/ J. Clayton Everett, Jr. (with consent)

J. Clayton Everett, Jr.

Zarema A. Jaramillo

**MORGAN, LEWIS & BOCKIUS LLP**

1111 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20004

Telephone: (202) 739-3000

Facsimile: (202) 739-3001

jeverett@morganlewis.com

zarema.jaramillo@morganlewis.com

Larry J. Saylor

**MILLER, CANFIELD, PADDOCK &  
STONE P.L.C.**

150 W. Jefferson Avenue, Suite 2500

Detroit, MI 48226

Telephone: (313) 496-7986

Facsimile: (313) 496-8454

Saylor@MillerCanfield.com

*Counsel for Sumitomo Riko Company  
Limited and DTR Industries, Inc.*

**MORGAN, LEWIS & BOCKIUS LLP**

/s/ J. Clayton Everett, Jr. (with consent)

J. Clayton Everett, Jr.

**MORGAN LEWIS & BOCKIUS LLP**

1111 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20004

Telephone: (202) 739-3000

Facsimile: (202) 739-3001

jeverett@morganlewis.com

*Counsel for Defendants Showa Corporation and  
American Showa, Inc.*

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that on February 17, 2016, I caused a copy of DEFENDANTS' OPPOSITION TO CERTAIN SERVING PARTIES' MOTION TO COMPEL DISCOVERY FROM NON-PARTY ORIGINAL EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURERS COMPLAINT to be electronically filed with the Clerk of the Court using the CM/ECF system, which will send notifications of such filings to all counsel of record.

/s/ Daniel T. Fenske

Daniel T. Fenske  
JENNER & BLOCK LLP  
353 N. Clark Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60654  
312-222-9350

*Counsel for Mitsubishi Electric  
Corporation, Mitsubishi Electric US  
Holdings, Inc., and Mitsubishi Electric  
Automotive America, Inc.*